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THE LOGIC OF RELIGION

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Reflection is evoked by the discovery that "things are not what they seem." Serious speculation as to the nature of the reality underlying the world's appearances began with Thales's crude cosmology and ran a free and vigorous course to the time of Plato's idealism and Democritus' atomism. But one who could review with some degree of impartiality the various conclusions of all these metaphysical speculations found a new problem in the fact that their results were marked by such a glaring lack of agreement. Such divergence as culminated in the antipodal differences between Plato and Democritus surely proved the failure of speculation to arrive at truth. Naturally then this activity of thought became itself a problem of investigation. Greek thought had come to an *impasse*. It was time for someone to inquire as to the processes of thought whereby truth was being sought. This was the work of Aristotle, the creator of logical science. There had, of course, been foreshadowings of it in the need felt by Socrates and Plato for more exact definition of ideas and terms. It remained for Aristotle to see and attempt to solve the general difficulty in a large and permanent way. "Aristotle made the great step in advance . . . the ripe self-knowledge of Greek science. . . . He offers an examination of the thinking activity on all sides, a comprehensive examination of its regular forms."¹

So much for the original occasion of logic in the narrower sense as a branch of philosophy. In general, a similar situation is involved in the development of any department of human activity. When we come to a point where our technique, our intellectual tools, our philosophy of the conduct in question, breaks down or involves us in serious embarrassment, we instinctively turn back upon that philosophy, that technique, to inquire what is wrong

¹ Windelband, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Engl. trans. by Tufts, *History of Philosophy*, 2d ed., pp. 132, 133.

with it, that it now fails to solve our problems or accomplish our tasks. This examination, or its results as an organized system of principles, is the logic of the activity in question, be it the logic of thinking, or the logic of science, or the logic of morality, or the logic of religion.

I. THE NEED OF A LOGIC OF RELIGION

The logic of religion is needed at the same strategic moment as is the logic of any other department of human development, namely, when, on the one hand, after much groping, successes and failures become gradually sifted, main lines of movement become distinguished from side issues, and, in general, the conditions of successful experimentation become more and more clearly recognized; and when, on the other hand, the need of strong, united, and unhesitating advance has become urgent. In religion we have now somewhat adequately taken stock of the past few centuries of action and reaction, confused groping and occasional clear glimpses of larger perspectives, and with increasing conviction realize the imperative social need of confident and comprehensive progress. Hence our greatest immediate need is a clear apprehension of the logic of the task we are undertaking.

We need religion, probably, as much as any age can have needed it. The prevalent confusion, "the tumult of the time disconsolate," is felt in every mind not wholly inert as a greater or less distraction of thought, feeling, and will; and we need to be taught how to live with joy and calm in the presence of inevitable perplexities. A certain natural phlegm is a great advantage in these days, and better still, if we could get it, would be religious assurance. Never was it more urgent or more difficult to justify the ways of God to men. Our material betterment is a great thing, and our comparative freedom a greater, but these rather increase than diminish the need of a higher discipline in the mind that is to use them profitably; the more opportunities the more problems. Social betterment is like the advance of science in that each achievement opens up new requirements. There is no prospect that the world will ever satisfy us, and the structure of life is forever incomplete without something to satisfy the need of the spirit for ideas and sentiments that transcend and reconcile all particular aims whatsoever. Mediaeval religion is too unworldly, no doubt, for our use, but all real religion has its unworldly side, and Thomas à Kempis and the rest were right in holding that no sort of tangible achievement can long assuage the human soul.

Still more evident is the need of religion in the form of "social salvation," of the moral awakening and leadership of the public mind. Society is in want of this, and the agency that supplies the want will have the power that goes with function—if not the church, then some secular and perhaps hostile agency, like socialism, which is already a rival to the church for the allegiance of the religious spirit.¹

This is not the first time in the history of Western thought that men have attacked the problem of clarifying the logic of religion. The great work of Thomas Aquinas is significant from the viewpoint of present-day progressive thought, chiefly for its crystallization of the logic involved in the religious thought of the Western world up to his day. Others, to be sure, had attempted the same task, and indeed, somewhat less clearly, attained the same result.

Hitherto there had been no formal distinction between the domain of philosophy and that of theology. Thomas laid down a clear line between theology and philosophy, between natural and revealed religion, and the province of reason as regards both, which has remained in force among thinkers of all creeds ever since. Philosophy passes from the consideration of the creatures to God; theology passes from God to the creature.²

But now we come upon evidence that this Thomist contribution to the logic of religion is no longer valid. That it has been, up until recently, is, to be sure, quite true. But theological pioneers today are claiming that theology, as well as philosophy, must pass "*from* the consideration of the creatures *to* God," that theology must be *inductive*, that doctrine must be formulated empirically. We are demanding a

theology, which in all sincerity asks the questions which are pressed from the hearts of men; which in its questioning uses fearlessly the best methods which critical science can furnish; which insists on no aristocratic privilege of definitely limited authoritative doctrines, but admits gladly to its precincts anything which compels the moral adoration of men; which learns gratefully from the past, but looks to a better future; which appreciates the service rendered by those conceptions of God and of salvation which have emerged in history, but confidently believes that the borders of our knowledge may ever be enlarged.³

¹ Cooley, *Social Organization*, p. 379.

² Workman, *Christian Thought to the Reformation*, p. 231.

³ G. B. Smith, *Social Idealism and the Changing Theology*, p. 243.

On the one hand, this is demanded by the spirit of the age, and, on the other, by the exigencies of the theological situation. For the formerly credible method of arriving *at* a consideration of the creatures *from* the consideration of God has been discredited by modern knowledge beyond all repair. The logic of the Thomist system needs no further elaboration. The system itself is utterly obsolete.

Now from the point where Catholicism loses connection with the advancing thought of Modernism, religion, in the progressive sphere, has moved on instinctively, without a conscious logic of its own movement. For several centuries it has been groping its way, marked by inconsistencies and reactions, but surprisingly vital in many directions. But more and more the inconsistencies have become embarrassing. More and more we have wanted a new theology that should be in fact as new as the new world of Modernism. More and more is felt the need of apprehending the deepest logic of the modern religious task. To put it baldly, we modern men are striving to make ourselves at home, religiously, in this new world of modern knowledge. We have tried to move much of the intellectual furniture of the Old World, the mediaeval home, into the new, only to find it increasingly incongruous. It will not fit. We have not made ourselves at home. Just what is it we are trying to do? We feel the religious craving within us; we get help from this or that suggestion; we seem to make some progress, but feel much perplexity. The whole task is as yet tragically incomplete. We are thrown back on ourselves. Just what is it we need to do? In a word, What *is* religion?

Furthermore, we are beginning to see that the logic of a modern religion must rest upon the logic of all religion. We understand the logic of the Catholic system. We understand also the logic of secular Modernism. But through both eras men feel religious needs and find religious satisfaction, and what we do not yet clearly understand is the logic of religion which is involved in both these eras and underlies both, the complete system of Aquinas and the nascent system of Modernism. It is not enough to seek for the logic of a modern religion. We have come to a place where the very life of religion is threatened by the sickening sense of relativism

which modern historical research so largely and increasingly fosters. If we are but seeking one sort of religion to replace another, an obsolete sort, this self-conscious relativism threatens the very heart of religious power. What we need, before we can have any sufficient confidence in our modern religion, whatever it may prove to be when matured, is a knowledge of the logic of religion *as a whole*. We are confronted with three vast eras, Paganism, Catholicism, Modernism. As we believe in the continuity of experience, we are compelled to understand the principles which underlie all three. We may be satisfied to understand the logic of other phases of human experience in a more or less disjointed way, to know, for example, the logic of ancient science, the logic of mediaeval science, the logic of modern science, but the very heart of religious satisfaction is gone if we thus separate the religious experience of one age from that of another. For the logic of Mediaevalism and that of Modernism are so disparate, the former seems so unreal, so futile, as compared with the latter, and yet the religious experience of the mediaevalist was so profound, so powerful, that our effort to establish a modern religion is likely to seem to ourselves a mere *tour de force*, and futile at that. Yet in spite of the self-consciousness of our effort, we feel that the same great forces are driving us forward which compelled the mediaevalist and the ancient to develop their systems. It is an understanding of these forces on the most inclusive scale that we need. It is the logic of religion that we must discover, and not merely the logic of Paganism or the logic of Catholicism or the logic of Modernism, if our experience is to be relieved of the oppressive self-consciousness which now disheartens us.

We have a modern religious spirit or attitude or conscience, but as yet practically no modern religious doctrine. To be sure, it is only slowly and with great difficulty that this strictly modern attitude has come to clear expression. It is as yet hardly more than an awareness of the moral challenge of the scientific spirit and a desire to meet that challenge if possible. It is not yet clear how this strictly modern attitude can produce a strictly religious content. Science and religion have been at odds so long that now, when a truce is felt to be desirable, it still remains doubtful whether

it is really feasible. Paganism made religion the affair of commerce with an invisible world, Catholicism made that invisible world a stricter "other" world, and with this "other" world, for fifteen centuries, religion, as the chief business of man, had entirely to do; and now, when modern knowledge has dissolved that "other" world into utter unthinkableness, and has made cogent the demand for an inductive, an empirical, theology, has, in a word, thrown the religious nature back inevitably upon "this" world, the religious thinker is for the time being embarrassed. Before we can go farther, we must find a satisfactory answer to the question, *What is religion?*

II. THE TYPE OF LOGIC NEEDED

There is so much fundamentally the same in Catholicism and traditional Protestantism that the logic of the two systems may be considered identical, at least in the most important elements.

There is a remarkable unity in the history of Protestant thought in the period from the Reformation to the end of the eighteenth century. There is still more surprising unity of Protestant thought in this period with the thought of the mediaeval and ancient church. The basis and methods are the same. Upon many points the conclusions are identical. There was nothing of which the Protestant scholastics were more proud than of their agreement with the Fathers of the early church. They did not perceive in how large degree they were at one with Christian thinkers of the Roman communion as well. Few seem to have realized how largely Catholic in principle Protestant thought has been. The fundamental principles at the basis of the reasoning have been the same. The notions of revelation and inspiration were identical. The idea of authority was common to both, only the instance in which that authority is lodged was different. The thoughts of God and man, of the world, of creation, of providence and prayer, of the nature and means of salvation are similar.¹

Now a dualism, "this world" and "the other world," is fundamental to this logic of Catholicism and traditional Protestantism. This dualism has been in process of dissolution for a long time, and in degree as this process becomes more advanced, we should expect to find the question *What is religion?* coming more and more strategically into prominence. And this is exactly what has happened. The last century witnessed the culmination of that process

¹ See E. C. Moore, *Christian Thought since Kant*, p. 2.

of dissolution, and it was Schleiermacher, at the dawn of the century, who laid the foundations for a new epoch in theology by asking the crucial question, What is religion? Kant had practically retired the age-old dualism and so had felt compelled to attempt to re-define religion. But both definitions retained, though with necessary vagueness, the sense of an "other" world. For Kant, religion was a sense of duty, duty with, as it were, overtones of a divine imperative, the categorical imperative "within," which somehow has the intelligible "other" world back of it. For Schleiermacher, religion was a feeling of dependence upon a God who is for the most part immanent in "this" world, and yet is apprehended through the God-consciousness of Jesus which has, in the final analysis, some sort of alien source. Ritschl also wrestled with the problem of defining religion, spurning both metaphysics and mysticism as the sphere or channel of its operation, and yet striving to save it from being swallowed up by secularism. The discredit of metaphysics and mysticism was essentially the discredit of the "other" world. The vast change going on in the world-view of the century is reflected in the most characteristic contribution of Ritschl, namely in his doctrine of justification and reconciliation, according to which salvation is essentially a matter of "this" world—a matter of reconstructed character, not of "other-worldly" rescue. Ritschl defines religion as a sense of "values." Theology rests upon "value-judgments," whereas science and the secular life in general rest upon "existential judgments." But in Ritschl also there lurks, in the last analysis, the old ontological dualism.

The "other" world, from the days of its creation by the genius of Plato, has been a "given" world, an a priori world, and while, and in so far as, it remains valid for religious thinkers, the definition of religion will naturally be an a priori conception. Kant's, Schleiermacher's, Ritschl's definitions are all of this a priori sort. As the very expression "origin of species" is the final stroke in the retirement of Platonism,¹ so the very expression "a psychology of religious experience" is the final stroke in the retirement of the habit of conceiving religion as a bridging of that gulf which the old dualism involves. When, about a decade ago, William James published

¹ See Dewey, *Influence of Darwin*.

his *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, a most significant milestone was reached. In place of a priori or arbitrary definitions of religion, the attempt was begun of finding an inductive definition by the application of psychological study to the phenomena of religious experience. While some psychologists of religion are careful to defend their attempt by disclaiming to believe that religion has no extra-scientific or preternatural reference, this apology cannot hide the real issue, for the application of scientific method to the study of religious experience logically implies the end of the old dualism. The "other" world is *not* "other" if it can be reached by a religious experience which is itself a part of "*this*" world's life—comes, that is, really under the cognizance of science.

It is noteworthy that the phraseology of the title of this epoch-marking book¹ is suggestive of the most obvious character of the whole field of religious experience, most obvious and perhaps most discouraging to the investigator who desires to find a definition. The "varieties" of religious phenomena are indeed bewilderingly numerous. The whole field of pagan, Catholic, and modern types stretches before us, subjective and objective, feeling, fact, and fancy, social custom and individual idiosyncrasy, emotions, activities, beliefs. It is little wonder if this branch of science hesitates, is hardly yet sure of having a really scientific method of procedure. Indeed the initial difficulty is to say what is rightful material for investigation. What *is* religious experience? What is morality—what is mere crass custom—what is primitive science? Obviously some tentative conception of the essential character of religious experience must be entertained before the selection of material can be even begun. And in this connection it is noticeable that while so far there is no unanimity of definition, there yet is a very large consensus as to what experiences are and what are not religious. Any working conception of the essence of religion must first of all demonstrate itself in this field of unquestioned religious phenomena. The final test of the definition will be the clarity with which it makes differentiation possible in the large margins of debatable material. More explicitly, the two chief requirements which we must make of any definition offered are these: First, it must account for the

¹ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

varieties of religious experience; that is, it must offer a simple and satisfactory clue to the infinite differences of expression of the religious life, in all lands and in all ages, and thus reveal their functional or dynamic identity. In the second place, it must serve to differentiate religion from morality, science, aesthetics, or any other department of custom or culture. Of course it may be supposed by some that the identity of religion is not merely functional or dynamic, but that there is an identity as it were of content. Leuba, for instance, holds that the essential mark of religion is a belief in some supernatural or superhuman agency, i.e., the *deity* content. But the majority of the psychologists of religion claim that this is not tenable. Again, it may be supposed that no ultimate differentiation between religion and, say, morality, is possible. Ames's conclusion is practically that.¹ But as there is an almost universal feeling that while religion and morality are indisputably very intimately connected, they nevertheless are essentially different, surely no definition of religion which does not explain both their difference and their intimate connection can be considered adequate.

The first of these two requisites of a definition calls for further comment. It means that the Hegelian rather than the Aristotelian logical viewpoint must be held, that a "concrete" rather than an "abstract universal" must be discovered.

Definitions fall into two general types, for a definition is a "universal," and logic recognizes two broadly different sorts of "universals," the "abstract universal" and the "concrete universal."

The universals of the traditional subsumptive logic are found by analysis and abstraction, the discovery of identity by elimination of differences, the classification of species under genera by attention to similarities and disregard of discrepancies. It gives the "abstract universal," the quality or group of qualities which account for or include the similarity of the various species in the genus. It was the service of Hegel to formulate a theory of "concrete universals." It is significant that this revolutionary logical innovation came just at a time when Darwin's *Origin of Species* was about to give the final blow to the Platonic world-view which

¹ E. S. Ames, *The Psychology of Religious Experience*.

was the metaphysical background of the Aristotelian logic.¹ Whereas the "abstract universal" dealt with species generically, the "concrete universal" deals with them genetically or at least organically. The former is based on identities, the latter is based on differentiation. The former looks for a means of classification, the latter for a means of control. The one depends upon analysis of a "given," the other seeks for the secret of creating new experience. The first looks for the common elements in similar results, the second looks for the *reason for the differences*. The one belongs to a static world, the other to a changing, growing world. The one deals with completed structures, the other with living functions. The one relies upon authority, whether the authority is a "given" of the philosopher's insight, as Aristotle thought, or of the prophet's vision, miracle-attested, as the theologian claimed, or of a system of truth, as the ecclesiastic held. The other relies upon experiment, exploration, discovery; it is the logic of science. The one talks of essence, substance, "nature," being. The other talks of activities, uses, functions, life. Principal Caird gives the following description of Hegel's concrete or organic universal.

This deeper and truer universality is that which may be designated ideal or organic universality. The idea of a living organism is not a common element which can be got at by abstraction and generalization, by taking the various parts and members, stripping away their differences, and forming a notion of that which they have in common. That in which they differ is rather just that out of which their unity arises and in which is the very life and being of the organism; that which they have in common they have, not as members of a living organism, but as dead matter, and what you have to abstract in order to get it is the very life itself. We do not reach it by first thinking the particulars, but conversely we get at the true notions of the particulars only through the universal.²

In the first place, the "varieties" of religious experience are so infinitely various that if the method of abstraction is used, there is little or no hope of finding the residual identity; and in the second place, if such could be found, it would necessarily be so vague, so utterly "abstract," as to furnish no valuable clues in attacking our

¹ See Dewey, *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, chap. i.

² Caird, *Introduction to Philosophy of Religion*, 1891, p. 218; see also Royce, *The Spirit of Modern Philosophy*, pp. 222 ff.

own peculiar twentieth-century reconstructive problem. Leuba's abstraction of a bare "deity" content, as the mark of all religious experience, even if it were defensible, is impotent in our present situation. The validity of theism is the very crux of our reconstructive problem. It is no help to be told simply that to be religious we must have a God. Those who have had their theism dissolved by modern knowledge are thus thrown back upon the alternative of irreligion, while nevertheless, in the agonies of their enforced atheism, they feel themselves to be poignantly religious. What they need is such an understanding of their religious hunger as will afford some clear line of attack upon the very heart of their problem, some immediately workable line of procedure which they may patiently and without embarrassment explore.

It would not be surprising if among the earliest attempts to define religion inductively a mixture of these two viewpoints should result—an "abstract" universal which is superficially "dynamic." And indeed this is what we find in a definition which has had considerable influence in recent discussions—Höfding's characterization of religion as "the conservation of values." This view regards religion as a function of society whose nature is seen in its most general results. That is, after reviewing the whole field of religious activities, the conclusion is reached that the only thing which can be said of religion which is true in all cases is that these various religious activities tend to "conserve values." But the abstract and impotent character of this definition is evident the moment we ask what such a conception means when applied to our present reconstructive task. What is religion for us? It is a conservation of values. What shall we do? We must practice such religious exercises, hold such religious beliefs, as shall tend to conserve the "values" of life which are regarded as in some way involved. Now if it be felt that all traditional forms of religion have become impotent to conserve our felt "values" (and this is just the core of our modern difficulty), we are accordingly forced to consider the invention of such forms of worship and such doctrines as may prove effective in the situation. But surely the artificiality of such a position, the self-consciousness of such an undertaking, is utterly embarrassing. Moreover, it is not apparent

how religion differs from any other department of life, for surely science and morality are no less truly means of "conserving values." In spite of the apparently "concrete" character of this "universal," its dynamic appearance, its evolutionary, functional terminology, Höffding's definition is really an "abstract" universal, it deals fundamentally, not with the cause of differences, but with residual similarities. It is essentially static. It reviews results rather than concrete motives, it deals with consequences rather than impulses. It is an abstraction from finished systems, rather than an insight into underlying motivation. No doubt it is entirely true that, as James¹ at the outset of this whole investigation pointed out, there is no specific religious "nature," no peculiar "religious instinct"; nevertheless we do not profoundly understand either religion or any other human experience unless we see it from its instinctive side rather than from that of its overt activities and achieved results. There is a great practical difference between the questions, What is the function of religion? and Of what is religion the function?

The author of this study believes that he has to suggest a definition of religion entirely different from any that have hitherto been put forward, and one which (1) is broad enough to include practically all the phenomena which the various psychologists of religion have fastened upon as religious; (2) is practical enough to suggest a natural method of differentiation in those marginal regions where religion seems indistinguishable from morality, or science, or art; (3) is "concrete" enough to explain the endless variation, in form and content, of religious experience; and (4) is so dynamic as to simplify our present reconstructive task and to suggest the most promising lines of advance.

But before stating it, let me further describe the "abstract" method in contrast with which this definition will be proposed.

The deductive, merely descriptive character of this "abstract" method is most clearly seen in the results of Professor Wright's analysis.² He points out that there are three types of definition thus far proposed; the first following the general direction of Höff-

¹ *The Varieties of Religious Experience.*

² "A Psychological Definition of Religion," *American Journal of Theology*, XVI (1912), 385.

ding's solution; the second insisting on the supernatural or super-human agency as an ever-present factor; and the third giving the chief importance to the "feeling" element. Professor Wright argues that each of these is correct with reference to some large mass of facts, and that if we are to find a definition which shall disregard no single religious fact we must include each of these three factors. He therefore defines religion as "the endeavor to secure the conservation of socially recognized values through specific actions that are believed to evoke some agency different from the ordinary ego of the individual or from other merely human beings, and that imply a feeling of dependence on this agency."¹

Now Dr. Wright himself seems to feel the abstract and merely descriptive character of this generalization though not willing to admit its futility. He says: "Perhaps the reader now feels that after all the definition merely affords a descriptive formulation of religion and assists in placing it in a classification along with other disciplines, but that it does not throw much light upon the questions in which he is most interested."²

Now the "abstract universal" is just as legitimate in its place as the "concrete." The Aristotelian logic has had such a long life because it is just the everyday attitude which we take toward the well-known and familiar. It sums up experience in useful and concise concepts. It is at home in the periods of authority. The major premise is, as I believe Dewey somewhere suggests, essentially the epitomized custom of the group.³ The "abstract universal" is useful when what is wanted is a more facile use of accumulated experience or a reinforcing of a long-accepted custom or truth. And that just that is the problem which Dr. Wright has in mind becomes evident in the latter part of his monograph. He holds that the use of such a definition will enable us to discover that religion has always been more or less successful in conserving social values (though to be sure it has oftener than not done so unconsciously by other means than those which it was explicitly

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 388, 392.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 402.

³ Cf. "The Concept in its very generality . . . is the conserver of the experience of the past. It is the custom of the past put into capitalized and funded form to enable the individual to get away from the stress and competition of the needs of the passing moment" (Dewey, *Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, p. 293).

employing, "suggestion" rather than the deity being the real agency); has generally produced a certain amount of social and moral solidarity and conservatism within the group; has often fostered a less sordid type of life than otherwise might have prevailed; and has helped to enrich and expand the personal life. And so he is interested in showing the importance of preserving, for the sake of general social usefulness, the function of religion as a conservational force tending to maintain our higher values. His remarks on the metaphysical validity of religion reveal the same attitude. On any one of the three types of philosophical foundation which contemporary thought affords, religion, he thinks, can claim to be dealing with reality in general and so is worthy of confidence and support. "In a word, the social and personal usefulness of religion once established, the question of its metaphysical validity will largely take care of itself."¹ In short, the present need seems to this writer to be to deduce the social value of religion today from the generalization that religion is a useful social institution. This is so characteristic of contemporary apologists that its significance for the logic of the situation should be carefully noted. If the continuance of religion as a social institution is the heart of our problem, then the deductive logic must have its way, and an abstract universal is the sort of definition that we need. But if the problem is actually much more acute than that, if it is expressed in its most crucial form in a widespread need of individuals rather than in a general social indifference; if the core of the difficulty for a multitude of the most earnest and thoughtful persons is, not "Shall we continue to be religious?"; but rather "*How* can we continue to be religious?"; if the metaphysical question is, not of the validity of religion in general, but of the validity of the individual's beliefs and practices in particular; then surely the logic needed is an inductive logic, and the abstract definition is not adequate to the present situation. Moreover, it is impossible to find an abstract definition without retaining some one or more of the elements of the content of the religious experience of the past from which the generalization is made, if at least the definition is to have any semblance of real working value. Höffding's definition, for

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 409.

instance, does not help us on our way in the explicit religious perplexities which confront us. It simply gives us a broader acquaintance with religion as it has been; it does not discover anything new. This weakness is apparently overcome in Wright's definition by the addition of the element of belief in the other-than-merely-human agency which is evoked by the religious activity. This is simply some deity or its equivalent. But this is a pure *a priori*, as far as the poignancy of the present situation is concerned. Everyone admits the helpfulness of believing in the co-operation of some deity. But that only adds to the embarrassment of the present problem, for the very crux of the difficulty is, "What God *can* I believe in?"

III. A "CONCRETE UNIVERSAL" PROPOSED

In its simplest statement, I would say that *religion is a social attitude toward the non-human environment*. The *quality* of religion will of course vary with the degree of organization of the social attitude and with the dimensions of the non-human environment; with the degree in which the various social attitudes are habitual and customary, or purposeful and conscious; with the extent to which the non-human environment has been personified by the social imagination or depersonalized by the rational processes induced by failure of habitual adjustments.

Or to state it otherwise: Broadly speaking, the most far-reaching and important distinction which we make regarding the world we live in is that line which we draw between "man" and "not man"; while our relations to environment fall into two classes, first, social adjustments, mostly made toward our fellow-men, and, secondly, mechanical, manipulatory adjustments, which are mostly made toward the things about us. The first constitute the sphere of morality, the second constitute the sphere of science. But, of course, these spheres are not water-tight compartments; there are endless cross-currents. For example, we may take the mechanical attitude toward men, and treat them as *things* (which is either non-moral or immoral). On the other hand, it is inevitable that sometimes we take a social attitude toward the non-human environment. *Within this latter general set of relations is the sphere of religious experience*. Violent or sudden stimulus tends to arouse

the whole organism to activity, so that any situation which transcends the efficiency of our acquired mechanical attitudes tends to call forth the larger organic response, or social attitude.¹ The mechanical attitudes are attitudes of only parts of the organism, whereas the social attitudes are attitudes of the whole organism. The most mechanical activity may develop into one genuinely social, as difficulty is encountered and vital needs are at stake. For instance, a savage is trying to lift a log. At first the action is merely muscular, quite mechanical, and devoid of emotional interest. But the log is heavy, or it rolls out of the arm's grasp, or it falls back on the man's foot and threatens to crush that member. In other words, as the difficulty of the enterprise increases, as the struggle proceeds, it becomes dangerous to his very life. Gradually or suddenly the whole organism becomes more and more involved, so that at last the savage regards the log as he would regard his bitterest foe, with hatred, anger, suspicion. This *social* attitude is expressed in a curse or a final kick, fear or grinning triumph. It is not otherwise with a civilized, sophisticated human. We stoop mechanically to pick up some slippery object, but say things under our breath when it eludes our grasp with the appearance of diabolic cunning. So one may curse the loose board of a plank sidewalk which trips him up; or one may apostrophize some object in nature, as I heard a friend do recently, on a fine morning in the Rockies, "O! you grand old mountains!" *In this realm of social attitudes toward the non-human is the sphere of religion.* We

¹ It is not meant of course that the mere muscular exertion of the whole body is necessarily a social attitude. What is meant is that the more the resources of the entire organism are challenged, the more the response tends to assume the social quality. Briefly, the reason for this is the predominance, both in number and in importance, of the social instincts. The social environment of primitive man is composed of both animals and men. Wild beasts and savage foes require alertness of the whole organism to escape or overcome danger. Moreover, the welfare of childhood, both in primitive and in civilized life, depends much more upon successful social adjustments than upon mechanical adjustments. The power of the gregarious and sex interests is obvious. Further, the mechanical adjustments are developed and controlled largely by the reflex equipment, and hence unconsciously, whereas the more important social adjustments require continuous attention. Hence, in general, the more vitally our physical environment stimulates us, the more is our whole, fundamentally social, nature aroused. A social stimulus awakens what I may call the pan-organic response. On the other hand, the pan-organic response, even though aroused by physical stimulation, is social in its tone. This, very briefly, is my defense for using the expression "the larger organic response or social attitude."

do not, today, of course, dignify by the name religion the anger which one may feel toward the door which the wind slams in his face, but the same attitude in primitive man we call animism and feel that if animism is not exactly religion, it is at least the stuff out of which religion is evolved. Neither do we call it religion when someone of a poetical temperament breaks out in speech to a mountain or the moonlight; yet the very same attitude, if organized into a social habit, elaborated more or less in ritual or defended by doctrine, we should not hesitate to call a religion, "a sun-cult," or what not.

It is admitted that a very hard-and-fast line of distinction cannot be drawn between the two types of attitude, the social and the mechanical, nor between the two types of environment, human and non-human. There are, to be sure, mechanical phases of every social attitude, as in the handclasp of friendship some of the same motor reactions take place as in the use of a hammer or saw. On the other hand, the social quality never seems to recede very far from the surface of mechanical adjustments, as in the use of tools and materials the workman is not always utterly indifferent to them—he is likely at any moment to exhibit a sort of fondness for them or impatience with them. So too with the human and non-human environments. We bestow affection upon our favorite dog or horse, we talk to the bird or the cat. Every employer feels the power of the "economic man" theory, in his temptation to treat workmen as so many tools, mere "things," to be hired, used, cast aside; in the crowded streets we pass most passers-by as indifferently as we step aside to avoid a lamp-post or other non-human obstacles. What is claimed in this study is not that these lines of distinction can be drawn with unwavering definiteness and secure fixity, but that these are the poles, as it were, about which our activities cluster, these are the foci about which our life swings, the contour of action being apparently closer now to this, now to that center of control. Indeed, to push this last suggestion a little bit, one might say that as the one focus of the ellipse and its more adjacent curve may represent social responses toward the human environment, and the other focus and its more adjacent curve may represent mechanical responses to the non-human environment, as

the curve is never, save at two bare points, obedient to the one or the other focus exclusively, so our life is never, save at two bare, logically but hardly empirically real points, obedient exclusively to either the social or the non-social, never either starkly mechanical nor utterly social; and it is just this cross-reference, so to speak, this response of the curve at one extremity to the focus at the other, this rising and falling stimulation of the social responses by the non-human environment, *that constitutes the realm of religion.*

Having roughly outlined the logical limits of religious experience as being "social attitudes toward the non-human environment," some further explanation is now necessary. Obviously much falls within that general scheme today which we should not call religious, although, as I suggested above, any example of similar attitudes, found in the dim primitive past, would probably be considered religious. It will throw light on this phase of my task to look at morals and science from the general viewpoint suggested. There are the two types of environment, the human and the non-human, and the two types of reaction, or attitude, the social and the mechanical. Within the general sphere of social attitudes toward the human environment, morality develops; within that of the mechanical or non-social attitudes toward the non-human, science; *within that of social attitudes toward the non-human, religion.* Now in all these there are two chief considerations which must be kept in mind. The first is the fact that specialization or development throws some activities into prominence, and *the importance of these is the criterion as to how far they are worthy of the adjectives moral, scientific, or religious,* respectively. Special activities are at first elicited by problem situations and are at that stage imbued with emotional interest. Often these same activities tend to become merely habitual, the emotional interest in them wanes, and they gradually fade into that vast mass of routine which is comparatively colorless. For instance, any deviation from the group custom is primitive immorality. But deviation today is not immoral unless it refers to actions which still retain or have come to have emotional interest. An eccentric mode of dress will be an idiosyncrasy or an immorality according to the degree in which it arouses the emotional interest of the group. Similarly, a new

method of registering fares on a street car will be regarded at first as a scientific device, but later will be so commonplace and uninteresting as to seem unworthy of the name scientific. So, too, it is the common criticism of the perfunctory observance of religious rites that such mere habit is unworthy the name of true religion. It is therefore necessary to discover what are the factors that make any experience or activity within the general logical sphere of religion more or less religious. And no extraneous principle must be brought in to vitiate the fundamental simplicity of the logical situation. The explanation lies first of all in the implications of the expression, "a social attitude." "Social" attitudes vary all the way from the instinctive automatisms of animals in their group behavior, the mating of robins, the scout duties of the lookout crow, the snarls of quarreling dogs, the admonitory paw-slaps of the maternal cat, up to the rhetorical flights of the patriot, the exquisite solicitude of a noble parent, the sympathetic handclasp of a loyal friend. But the element which makes the latter human rather than merely animal is the emergence in a man of a "self"-consciousness. This "self"-consciousness varies in organization, sensitiveness, and other qualities from the quasi-animal beginnings in the child or the savage up to the noblest character of Christian maturity. Now this is the key to the problem of the specifically moral action within the general sphere of social attitudes toward the human environment. We say that any action is moral rather than non-moral in so far as the self is actively and consciously present therein. To turn to the similar religious problem, we would say that in any social attitude toward the non-human, the attitude is more or less religious according to the degree in which the "self"-consciousness is organized and active. But even as morality depends for its degree of moral-ness not only upon the self factor but also upon the quality of the human environment within which the self is active, so any experience is more or less religious in proportion as the non-human environment with which the self makes adjustment is large or small, important or trifling. Even as we say that the highest morality is incompatible with provincialism, that a man is not thoroughly moral if he neglects the ballot, that though charity begins at home it cannot stay there, that the

business man who has never seen beyond his factory walls is as yet to that extent non-moral, so too the greater the scope of the non-human to which the self, the moral organism, adjusts itself, the more is that adjustment worthy the name religious.

A further word of explanation is in order here. Every vital situation has two chief stages, the problem stage in which active readjustment is demanded and the solution stage in which the activities which emerge through reflection or experiment go on until some new problem arises. Now the tendency of activities once established to become habitual is useful so long as the situation continues which called them forth and in which they are efficient. This situation, however, may cease to exist, while the habitual activities go on of their own momentum. So long as the situation lasts, the activity is, though habitual, worthy the name "moral" or "religious," as the case may be, but when the situation ceases to exist the habitual activity becomes mere meaningless routine, and less and less worthy the name "moral" or "religious." The point is that "moral" and "religious" are essentially vital terms in that they imply a situation of great interest and importance and are more and more applicable within their respective logical spheres in degree as the adjustments contemplated or achieved are of profound and far-reaching significance.

Again, the expression "non-human" will readily be understood to refer in general either to nature or the supernatural, the so-called physical universe which we directly experience or the so-called spiritual world which we experience by faith or imagination. A *social* attitude to such a world beyond the sensuous as Christianity has conceived is, of course, natural and inevitable, since it is just as truly a social environment as the human. A social attitude toward nature so long as there is this divine social environment beyond nature is for the most part unnecessary and unnatural, since nature is *ipso facto* comparatively devoid of importance. The heart of the modern religious situation is just this, that historico-psychological research has of late increasingly revealed the processes by which that other or divine world, that social environment beyond nature, was built up by the social imagination of primitive man, philosopher, and saint, while at the same time scientific

technique and scientific theory have revealed the unexpected importance and vast but inescapable horizons of this world. Our non-human environment is now, at least in our critical and non-traditional moods, not the supernatural, but nature. Much confusion has resulted from the fact that the traditional adjustments have gone on of their own momentum, after the real situation was vastly changed. But it is not enough to point out this fact, as so many have been so busy doing, and conclude that since our largest environment is now no longer social, we need no longer take a social attitude toward it, or, in other words, need no longer be religious. Whereas the divine social environment in which man has so long lived has immensely fostered his growing sense of selfhood or moral self-consciousness, both democracy and science have taken up and carried much farther this thing that the traditional other-worldliness had been doing. Modern life is much more self-conscious, man is much more aware of himself with the historical background which Darwinism suggests than with the scheme of the Book of Genesis. Over against this self-conscious modern man is nature, with its vast unplumbed significance; and a moral reaction, a social attitude, a "self"-adjustment thereto is no less inevitable, though apparently vastly more difficult, than in the "ages of faith," when man's all-inclusive horizon was a divine society.¹

¹ For the suggestion of the general idea of the distinction between the social and non-social environments, and between the social and mechanical attitudes, I am indebted to Professor G. H. Mead's lectures in social psychology.

It may seem to the reader that a social attitude to the non-human, if that non-human be "nature" or the "world," that is, a social attitude toward a non-social environment, is a contradiction in terms, and religion consequently impossible or an absurdity. This is of course the crux of the constructive problem, which waits for some further investigation of the whole matter of our social and mechanical adjustments out of which have probably come, respectively, our apparently contradictory sets of teleological and mechanistic concepts.

[To be concluded in the April number]